

# ABOUT MUSIC

– By Mariss McTucker

## Growling Old Men: *Chicken Feed and Baling Twine*

Recorded and mixed by Ben Winship at The Henhouse in Victor, ID; additional recording at Woody Overtones Studio, Bozeman, MT, and Electric Peak Recording, Gardiner, MT; produced by Ben Winship and John Lowell, 2013.

Livingston resident John Lowell and Idahoan Ben Winship, musical friends for ages who played in such famed Montana bands as Loose Ties and Kane's River, call their fourth collaboration "a collection of original and obscure Americana."

The two stellar musicians have assembled pieces they've performed live, but haven't previously recorded. Bozeman bassist David Thompson adds harmony vocals to the two lead singers.

A nice bluegrass duet, the traditional "Lazy John" is the first tune out of the chute. Guitarist Lowell and mandolin player Winship trade sizzling breaks throughout, as Lowell croons the words in his sweet, slightly nasal baritone.

"Waterbound," written by Dirk Powell, gets a lovely, lonely treatment. It's a great ballad, differing from the bluegrass of the same name that Lowell recorded on his recent *I Am Going to the West* CD. He and Winship share a spooky break of unison notes, providing a contextual flavor.

Sparkling, fastidious instrumental work pervades the CD, natch. The jazzy and Grisman-esque "My Name's Mudd," written by Winship, sets the '20s ballroom scene with finger-snapping fervor and a tongue-in-cheek delivery. If these two instruments can simulate that big-band feel on a cool riff, they pull it off here.

And anyone who's met someone stuck with such a notorious moniker knows it has a bad rep, and whoever wears it gets a bad rap. Check out these lyrics: "My name's Mudd, it ain't Rockefeller; lucky pennies don't roll my way. Just ask the judge, ask the bank teller, my name's Mudd." Ha!

There's the traditional "Elzik's Farewell," performed with wispy, ominous overtones. The boys give this one a workout, trading leads that double back into harmony lines.

There's the Norman-Blake-written tragedy "Billy Gray." And Jeffrey Foucault's sad tale of accidental death, "Doubletree," shows the duo's proficiency at the mournful and very touching numbers. There's more good stuff, so give this well-produced CD a listen.

Visit the fellows at [www.growlingoldmen.com](http://www.growlingoldmen.com).



## Exigh: *Exit*

Engineered and mixed by James Barrett at Wapikiya Records, Missoula, MT, produced by James Burwick, 2013.

Missoula Christian rapper Joseph Burwick, who together with engineer James Barrett makes up the duo Exigh, has a new CD out with 11 compositions that continue to explore the human condition and its dark side, and his love of God.

Burwick composed the lyrics to Barrett's music; other performers on the tracks include Rick Potter, Aaron Beadle and Connor Moore. The duo uses some sampling from the nationally known Cure, and from Bozeman music-maker Dan Dubuque for a couple of cuts, too.

"Burn Your Boat" exhorts people to stop being proud and get together, to a slow rock-steady beat. "Standing on a Mountain Top in the Dark with God" starts out pretty, with sonorous chords and a haunting trumpet sound ("Lost in a world of gimmicks and depression I climbed to the mountain top just to learn a lesson"). Burwick has a deep baritone that fits well with his rhymes.

"Sun and the Moon" is a light R&B prayer to God, and "Crazy" has our protagonist in love with someone who hurts him ("The words you say they seem to tear me apart and they don't fade away like a physical mark"). It's got a slow and pretty melody.

This album seems more melodic than the previous effort, *Metamorphosis*, perhaps showing a maturing of Exigh's musical leanings. There is a lot more for their fans to explore here as well.



## Luke Dowler: *Polarized*

Engineered by Mark Dorflinger at 118 West Studios and mixed by Jason Zerbin at Sound Farm Studios, both in Simi Valley, CA; produced by Luke Dowler, 2012.

Kalispell singer/songwriter Luke Dowler has come out with a great new CD in the rock vein. The young man, who has film and online music credits, possesses an expressive voice, and uses it well here.

Dowler calls his music "alt pop with huge chorus hooks and an everyman approach," which describes it well. He plays bass and guitar, while his brother, Zach, plays drums. Mark Dorflinger provides trombone, piano and organ, and string arrangements are by Jacob Yoffee.

Swelling notes and crisp drum work open "Coming Alive" as Dowler's breathy, emotional baritone sets the pace. "Hey Boy" finds Dowler admonishing a friend to treat himself better; it has rockin' and fuzzed-up chunks of guitar, the six-string broiling on the chorus.

The title tune is thoughtful, slow, yet powerfully driven ("We live our lives just to spite the other side"); and "No One Else" has a hip sensibility with a cool guitar break a la Lindsey Buckingham – this one's a definite hit.

"Perseus" starts clear and sparse, just before the drums barrel in. It speaks



of living life with the exhilarating rush of a street protest. "Oh, I wanna riot, 'cause I don't wanna burn out quiet" and "I want a soul like a kerosene cocktail." There's a lyric for you.

"Collider" enters with sweet strings, moody and pretty, as Dowler shows his great range and emotion, and "Umbrella" is downright pop, with its snappy, jazzy beat and ba-da-da sensibility.

"Something Good" is rock-steady, and has yet another catchy refrain.

Dowler has a spot-on feel for writing songs that seem familiar the first time you hear them. That's a talent, folks.

In "Big Sky," Dowler demonstrates his ability to get right to the nut of a subject, with great melodic visuals. How about: "There's a bullet hole, deep inside of every soul; you're so beautiful when you fill the space between." The danceable melody gets the toes movin', and, one hopes, other parts, too. I like this guy.

The album features smashing production as well. Visit the artist at [www.lukedowler.com](http://www.lukedowler.com).

## Judy Fjell: *Goin' Over Home*

Recorded and engineered by Judy Fjell at Good Luck Studios, Helena, MT; edited and mixed by Rick Kuschel at The Recording Center, Missoula, MT; produced by Judy Fjell, 2013.

Helena singer/songwriter and guitarist Judy Fjell, long known in Montana music circles as a "musical activist" who has helped many people find their singing voices, just released an album chock-full of great solo guitar instrumentals.

The 14 pieces are fairly split between her originals and some other favorites. She's had so many listeners tell her they can hear her voice in the guitar that she calls the CD *American Fingerstyle Through the Hands of a Singer*.

Fjell has written oodles of songs and recorded 18 albums on her own label in a long career that includes performing all over the U.S. Among her many accomplishments, she has established music empowerment workshops and retreats and founded the Helena chapter of the Montana Women's Chorus, which she currently directs.

The new CD came about after many hours of playing her own compositions, and being struck by new musical ideas within them. She was awarded a grant from Helena's Myrna Loy Center for the project, and decided to record a full-length CD. It brims with surprising and different takes on well-known pieces, to boot.

Fjell's own "Pure Joy" opens the compilation, with its jumpy and bluesy syncopation, the chords snapping fluidly as she bounces the melody along. There's a sweet, rich intro to the Harold Arlen/E.Y. Harburg nugget, "Over the Rainbow," performed with sleepy-eyed and dreamy ambience, and her relaxed "Masa's Waltz" gets reprised as the finale ("Masa's Minute Waltz").

Her "Where the Mountains Meet the Prairie" is jazzy and offbeat; Fjell plays harmony lead notes, then pings harmonic chords, which answer the lead like softly falling raindrops. In contrast, she gives her lower guitar strings a workout on the spiritual medley, "What Wondrous Love/Poor Wayfarin' Stranger." Starting out slowly and thoughtfully, "Wondrous" settles into a rolling blues sound, tribal almost, before seamlessly flowing into "Stranger." Fjell bends notes in some chords just enough to retain the blue tinge. Cool!

Her "Cat Nap" is a sprightly country blues, and the original "Elena" is soft and sweet with melodic arpeggios. "Lonesome Moonlight Variations" is Fjell's study of the famous Bill Monroe tune, "Lonesome Moonlight Waltz." Because it's such a killer instrumental, whoever plays it will thrill audiences, but Fjell gives it extra depth and theme by her terrific guitar work.

There are many more cuts of ear candy on the CD; it's a great album to listen to by the fireplace. Rick Kuschel's deft engineering skills top off the effort.

Fjell has recently been touring and performing songs from the album, so here's hoping many of you get the chance to hear her. Visit [www.judyfjell.com](http://www.judyfjell.com).



## Britchy: *Dream On*

Recorded by Rick Kuschel at The Recording Center, Richie Reinholdt at Animaltown Studios, and Britt Arnesen in her Missoula kitchen; produced by Richie Reinholdt and Britt Arnesen, 2013.

Missoula songwriters Richie Reinholdt and Britt Arnesen, teamed as the folk duo Britchy, have released their first studio album together, replete with 14 original tunes.

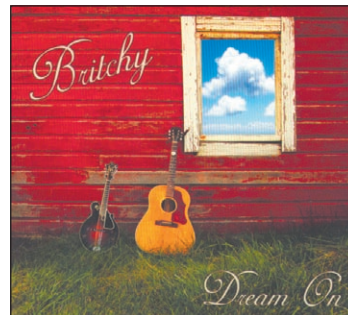
Reinholdt, a multi-instrumentalist and mainstay of the Missoula music scene, has joined Alaskan Arnesen for the past two years, playing a folk-soft-rock-bluegrass mix of Americana to appreciative audiences in the area. Reinholdt has more than a dozen albums under his belt, while Arnesen has toured extensively in her home state and elsewhere, and has two albums of her own.

On liner notes, the duo says "the music harks back to a time of genuine attention spans and authentic human relationships," and they explore that concept here. The sparsely recorded and clean album alternates their compositions, spanning the many moods of love and its ramifications.

They open with Arnesen singing the up-tempo and bluegrassy "The Lovin Bee" while Reinholdt plays mandolin. Reinholdt's "Time Won't Wait" is a Beatle-esque ballad, with nice chords and a catchy chorus. "Scenic Idaho" is Arnesen's country-flavored piece ("... for every ounce of trouble, you've got a pound of charm"). Reinholdt delivers a simple and melodic guitar break here.

He plays banjo on his folksy "Nightingale," and Arnesen's "Canyon's Lullaby" features some nice duet singing by the pair; their complementary voices match inflections for a nice touch. Reinholdt sings about a "Tuff Girl" and Arnesen's "Walking Shoes" tells about a prodigal son who goes astray and doesn't heed the words of his mama ("time is short, the stakes are long ...").

There's plenty more here. On an interesting note, the duo used the online tool, Kickstarter, to raise donations for the album from fans in many states and several countries – an avenue that other musicians may want to pursue. Visit [www.britchymusic.com](http://www.britchymusic.com).



9

## State of the Arts welcomes CDs

*State of the Arts* welcomes CD submissions by Montana musicians for inclusion in the About Music section. The recordings must be professional, commercially available, full-length CDs, with cover art and liner notes. Brief biographical information on band members would be helpful to the writer.

Please send submissions to either the Montana Arts Council, PO Box 202201, Helena, MT, 59620; or *Lively Times*, 33651 Eagle Pass Trl., Charlo, MT 59824.